

RESPECT AND NONVIOLENCE AMONG RECENTLY SEDENTARY PALIYAN FORAGERS

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Contrary to expectations (e.g. Bender 1978; Draper 1975; Kent 1989; 1990; Rafferty 1985), Paliyan foragers in south India remain relatively nonviolent when becoming sedentary. First, I review fifteen factors which are thought by others to pertain to disputes among foragers. Second, Paliyan beliefs and practices are examined regarding respect for the individual, avoidance of disrespect, and ways of handling of disrespect when it occurs. Third, I compare conflicts and means for managing them in a forest-oriented band and a Paliyan village settled for about 150 years. Settled Paliyans have a slightly lower *per capita* frequency of episodes of conflict; while their conflicts are more severe, they are rarely serious. Finally, Paliyan data are reviewed with reference to the fifteen causal factors, six of which help explain continued nonviolence. Successful Paliyan peace-keeping may be due in part to both the multiplicity of their safeguards and the prevention of positive feedback. In the long run, however, altered treatment of children foreshadows change.

Paliyans on the east slope of south India's southernmost ranges have long foraged for intermittent trade and for subsistence (Gardner 1985; 1993). During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a few bands became more settled. A comparison is offered of conflicts and conflict management in a forest-oriented band and a Paliyan community estimated locally to have been settled since the early nineteenth century. Contrary to *theoretical* expectations, the sedentary Paliyans remain relatively nonviolent.

Since mid-century, ethnographers have reported that nomadic and semi-nomadic foragers in Asia, South America and Africa often use mobility as a way of dealing with conflict¹ and Lee and DeVore (1968) noted that this might be the case in all nomadic foraging societies. Ethnographers attached two implicit corollaries to their theory: (a) a shift toward sedentism increases the duration, and usually the number, of interpersonal contacts, thereby increasing the potential for friction; and (b) sedentism can give rise to circumstances, practices and commitments which complicate one's moving away from antagonists. By the 1970s, archaeological interest led to collaborative discussion focused upon clarifying causality. Cases were examined closely (e.g. Bahuchet & Guillaume 1982; Coombs *et al.* 1982; Draper 1992; Hitchcock 1982; Kent 1989; 1990; 1995; 1996; Knauf 1990; Lee 1979), surveys and overviews were offered (e.g. Bender 1978; Gardner 1991a; Kelly 1995; Rafferty 1985). Besides mobility, a number of factors were said to bear on

violence among foragers. These will be examined in the first main section of this article.

Despite the analytical attention to foragers' conflict management, accounts of it tend to remain simple. Mobility is still treated by many as if it is the prime instrument for the job, or as if there is a single main functional alternative, such as resort to leaders. Given data which were available thirty years ago, Lee and DeVore concluded that 'judging from their generally flexible group structure, resolution of conflict by fission may well be a common property of nomadic hunting societies' (1968: 9) and it 'may help to explain how order can be maintained in a society without superordinate means of social control' (1968: 12). Kent, looking at newly settling foragers in Botswana twenty-eight years later, persists in phrasing her description in the same terms, thus:

When a dispersed nomadic mobility pattern is abandoned, the absence of a formal leader becomes a serious liability, threatening the stability of a newly aggregated sedentary community, such as Kutse. A traditional method of resolving disputes without the presence of an arbitrator – i.e., mobility – is not feasible in a sedentary context (Kent 1996: 10).

In order to understand how a change in degree of mobility affects the amount and severity of conflict in a given society, there may be no substitute for stepping back and viewing mobility as but one of a repertory of problem-solving mechanisms. Why a repertory? It is doubtful that extremely egalitarian peoples who lack authorities would find a single means of responding to conflict sufficient. Because some such peoples value nonviolence highly, they might be expected to have diverse and redundant means for handling conflict.

This article examines conflict resolution among Paliyan foragers in Tamilnadu, south India. One striking aspect of their culture is the insistence that *all* people be respected, and they have various means for avoiding socially disruptive prestige, protecting rights of the young, avoiding escalation of conflict, and, in general, implementing effective anarchy. Respect for the individual is a focal and widely ramifying Paliyan theme. This article will first review some pertinent, central Paliyan beliefs and practices. It is theorized that they are intimately related not only with one another, but with much else in the culture. For the sake of perspective, note will be taken of comparative and generalizing literature on some of the subjects covered.

We will look at continuity and change in Paliyan conflict resolution by comparing a forest-oriented band with a Paliyan village estimated locally to have been settled for about 150 years. The kinds of conflict in the two communities and the means for controlling or managing conflict will be taken up in detail. Diverse changes are apparent among Paliyans who have become sedentary in the frequency, types, severity and handling of conflict. Yet, unlike some settling foragers in Africa and Australia, they retain their ability to avert serious violence.

The article opens and then closes with a broad perspective on causality. The situation and culture of Paliyans are examined in terms of all factors said to have a bearing on conflict among foragers. A few are shown to clarify the Paliyan patterns.

A broad perspective on causality

According to recent literature, at least fifteen factors bear on the existence, frequency, intensity and handling of disputes among foragers. Six pertain in some way to sedentism, five bear on aspects of culture contact, the others concern general features of a foraging way of life. Although they can be separated for purposes of discussion, it is apparent that many of them are intimately linked with one another. The factors related somehow to sedentism are:

(1) *Mobility*: Study of nomadic and semi-nomadic foragers indicates that the frequency and severity of disputes commonly increase when they become more settled (Kent 1989; 1990). When people do not simply move away from minor irritations or antagonisms, it is likely that some conflicts will escalate.

(2) *Group size*: Lee documents that serious fighting is associated with larger than usual groups; he argues that fear of conflict leads to adaptive spacing (1979: 389, 397). Others contend that, as foragers settle, larger-scale groups are usually formed; an increase in number of interpersonal dyads increases the potential for conflict (Hitchcock 1982; Johnson 1982; Kent 1990).

(3) *Property constraints*: When foragers settle they invest in substantial housing, other non-portable property, and land (Lee & DeVore 1968). These complicate separating parties in conflict (see point 1). Labour contracts could do the same.

(4) *Domestic privacy*: Draper (1975) points to the heightened vulnerability of sedentary Ju/'hoansi women, whose marital conflicts become invisible to other parties due to newly substantial houses. Neighbours and relatives, being less aware of the women's difficulties, are less able to help head them off.

(5) *Accepting arbitration from leaders*: Kent (1989) holds that settling foragers compensate for lost mobility by investing leaders with the authority to arbitrate.

(6) *Economic competition*: Knauff (1987: 479) argues that, in settled groups with 'increasing control and competition over socioeconomic exchange and property', there will be competition for male status.

The five factors which have to do with culture contact are:

(7) *Subjection to external pressure*: Pressure from powerful neighbours is theorized to underlie development of 'nonviolent [foraging] cultures' (Dentan 1978; Gardner 1966; Miller & Dollard 1941; Morris 1982: 96; but see Knauff 1987). Most peaceful peoples are indeed encysted within more powerful systems and agents of contact routinely treat them abusively.

(8) *Having a refuge*: Having a place of retreat is necessary if one is to flee from conflict (Dentan 1978; Gardner 1966).

(9) *Learning violence from outsiders*: Foragers who come into close contact with their neighbours can learn violent behaviour from them (Knauff 1990; Robarchek 1994).

(10) *Alcohol*: Drinking is reported to contribute to violence among African foragers who live in contact settings (Kent 1989; 1990; Lee 1979).

(11) *Getting adjudication from outsiders*: Lee (1972; 1979) finds that Ju/'hoansi are beginning to use authorities from the outside to adjudicate

disputes. Foragers could emulate the use of authorities, or have it forced upon them by external parties.

And, the four factors which may be simply a matter of a foraging way of life are:

(12) *Social levelling*: Nomadic foragers are said to emphasize cooperative and other behaviour (especially in food distribution), effectively levelling group members socially and reducing the chance of conflict due to property differences or pride (Berndt 1978; Knauff 1994; Lee 1969; Wiessner 1982).

(13) *Fearing sorcery*: According to Whiting (1950) and Swanson (1960), in societies which lack superordinate punishment and legitimate social controls, we can expect both belief in sorcery and fear that misbehaviour will provoke sorcery. This pertains to many foraging societies.

(14) *Competing for women*: Knauff (1987: 477) holds that violence in noncompetitive, egalitarian societies is due to 'male disputes over women'.

(15) *Finally, socialization*: Children may be taught specific beliefs about violence and nonviolence in the course of training for their way of life (Briggs 1994; Draper 1978; Fry 1994).

Most of these nascent theories would benefit from formalization and all deserve to be tested. While that can not be attempted here, each will be examined below for its possible relevance to Paliyan patterns of continuity and change.

Respect for the individual, in theory and practice

Numerous societies have been described as emphasizing and protecting the individual such that authorities are unnecessary (Barclay 1982; Fried 1967; Tylor 1899: 405–16). The values and practices of such societies overlap so much that we may provisionally regard them as constituting an 'individual-autonomy syndrome'. It was recently described as including

pressure on children for self-reliance, independence, and individual achievement; individual decision making in matters having to do with family, power, property, ritual, etc.; extreme egalitarianism, including extreme gender egalitarianism; techniques for prestige avoidance and social levelling; absence of leaders; what Meillassoux [1973] and Woodburn [1982] call instantaneous or immediate [return] economic transactions; individual mobility and a corresponding openness and turnover in band membership; resolution of conflict through fission and mobility rather than by violence or appeal to authorities; bilateral social structure; a general tendency toward informal arrangements and individually generated, *ad hoc* structures; and relatively high levels of interpersonal variability in concepts, beliefs, and manner of expression (Gardner 1991a: 547–9).

This wording reflects theoretical anthropological concerns that date back to 1937 (e.g. Barry *et al.* 1959; Honigsmann 1968; Leacock 1978; Lee & DeVore 1968; Mead 1937; Peltó 1968; Rubel & Kupferer 1968; Woodburn 1982) as well as comparative ethnography dating from 1946 (e.g. Bird-David 1988; 1990; Bolton 1984; Embree 1950; Honigsmann 1946; Oliver 1965; Sponsel & Gregor 1994; Turnbull 1968). Parts at least of the syndrome have been described by generations of theorists. For instance, some have had a primary interest in economics or child-training; others focused on conflict resolution. Some emphasized the seemingly chaotic results of individualized decision-

making and loose organization; others looked instead at the elegant and starkly simple principles of the syndrome.

Aspects of the Paliyan version of the syndrome have been described in articles on subsistence economy, shamanism, medical knowledge and practice, and intercultural relations (Gardner 1988; 1991b; 1993; 1995). But, if we are to achieve an overall picture of Paliyan patterns, something needs to be said about the focal theme as such and about the management of disrespect.

To diagram a Paliyan community of, say, thirty persons using an equivalent of the conventional pyramid model, we would draw something resembling a segmented worm – with everyone on the same level. Two versions of the diagram would be required. First, to represent decision-making in a community we must include in the line all but young children, who would be left out rather than placed below their parents because authority *per se* is not a social variable. Second, to portray the community in terms of the respect that is owed to individuals, the figure would merely be expanded to include the very young. People merit equal respect by virtue of being people.

Paliyans define as disrespectful any sort of conduct which interferes with another person's autonomy. A Paliyan term, *tarakkoravaa* ('to be disrespectful') means literally 'to lower or diminish in level', or 'to put [a person] down'. Yet, it is just as problematic to depend on others (i.e. be a subordinate) as it is to put other people down (i.e. act superordinately). Both infringe the rights of others, and violate the symmetry that should exist between mutually respecting equals.

Provision is made for infants and children, the seriously ill, and people decrepit with age to seek support from certain others. Where adults are involved, an obligation to extend aid beyond the household in emergencies is usually limited to particular primary relationships: brother–sister, sister–sister, and parent–grown child. Those involved usually accept these arrangements graciously. As for children, observed cases suggest that any nearby person will aid a child who is hurt, threatened or afraid (an example is described below).

While children younger than about seven do not make important decisions or handle power, even non-relatives will step in if needed to guarantee their right to respect and protection. As they mature, their rights soon include freedom to reach decisions without interference. It would infringe their rights for parents to say that 8- or 9-year-olds cannot move out of the home or engage in work of their own choice. Young people may even take legitimate offence over strongly worded advice.

By their actions and reactions Paliyans made clear what they meant by 'disrespect' long before I ever heard their beliefs and values expressed in words. Actual examples of individuals putting themselves above and below others deserve examination.

Periya Poonnan, aged about 60, occasionally harangued particular members of the Cempaka Tooppu settlement just as people were waking, at dawn. For instance, he charged Naacci, his 50-year-old wife, with striking him; he complained about the sexual activity of youths, including by implication his niece, Cellamma, whom Naacci suspected him of wanting to marry; and he maintained that my research and my diet caused several problems, including an epidemic which took one child's life.² His loud, lengthy, self-important outbursts

irritated both those he addressed and the others he wakened. If only by contrast with the soft, sparing utterances customary to Paliyans, they constituted an assault on everyone. Periya Poonnan generally drew no direct verbal responses, but later in the day I could sometimes elicit discreet remarks, especially from youths, concerning the apparent bases for his loud complaints. I say 'apparent bases' because Periya Poonnan made mistakes. I found him to be unusually and inappropriately distrustful, prone to drawing conclusions from slender evidence, given to exaggerating, and lacking in self-control. Whether or not his suspicions were justified, people thought it disrespectful of him to make accusations and tell others what to do. He had also earned a reputation for responding to problems by verbal counter-attack or physical violence instead of self-restraint. Due to his volatile, intrusive and superior manner, Periya Poonnan was seen as being habitually disrespectful toward others.

Periya Poonnan's daughter-in-law had a problem of the opposite sort. At the time of the study Nallamma was about 25, with one child each from her first and third marriages. She was unnecessarily dependent, a malingerer: she acted as if ill health made subsistence work impossible, walked with the slow pace of an ill person, seldom joined foraging parties, yet never appeared to seek diagnosis or treatment of an illness. This unnecessary dependence was an imposition on those who fed her. To make things worse, gifts of food to her or to her thin, hungry daughters now and then occasioned misunderstandings. Food from her industrious female cousin KaNNiamma was no problem. But help from her unproductive father-in-law led to jealous accusations. Naacci said that she herself was being starved by her husband when he fed his granddaughters and she saw Periya Poonnan's gifts to Nallamma as evidence of sexual involvement.

Paliyan men and women find knowledge about people to be touchy. While they deem it acceptable to talk about the skills of 'headmen' (described below), most Paliyans assiduously avoid all other comparative or evaluative discussion of abilities of people, even though some really are so much more skilled or knowledgeable than others that Paliyans must be aware of this. Sometimes a single question inviting such comparison makes a consultant so guarded that further interviews are jeopardized. Paliyans find it difficult to admit that a community member, self included, has expertise, and informants who do concede it are prone to void the exercise with a sudden, all-inclusive retraction. I hold that their silence on the subject is based on principle; not only is flaunting of capability absent, but denials that there could be interpersonal differences have the strength and tone of firm dogma. Paliyans act similarly in their economy, for they are self-conscious about doing or receiving anything which sets them off from others. Some people do enjoy work more than others and are more productive, but cannot talk about it. When I told Catayan experimentally, but discreetly, that he had gathered more soap nuts than anyone else for a forest contractor (he had obtained about 30 per cent more than any other worker), he squirmed uncomfortably and denied it. Then he smiled, went over to KooTTe who was holding 2-year-old Carooca, tickled the child's stomach, patted her backside, and indicated to me that tomorrow KooTTe would collect more than he – implying that differences in productivity are a matter of chance. Why is special expertise awkward?

Paliyans do not wish to be seen putting themselves above their fellows, which is precisely what 'disrespect' means, and they can hardly welcome others being dependent upon them. For those who lack expertise, there is the unsavoury possibility that they will find themselves dependent. Most adults preserve their autonomy jealously. By denying that differences in expertise exist, people appear to be making a social-structural statement.

Gender equality through prestige avoidance

Ethnographers and theorists have long linked prestige with the securing and distributing of food. Yet approaches to conceptualizing the relationship between food and prestige have been diverse: among foragers, sharing may encourage risk management and efficiency in subsistence (e.g. Cashdan 1985; Henry 1951); economic productivity (e.g. Dowling 1968); sociability, social integration, or companionship (e.g. Ingold 1988; Sahlins 1965: 165, 172); and fitness (e.g. Hawkes 1991). Prestige itself has also been looked at diversely. In Friedl's words, it is 'a real and important factor in all known human societies' (1967: 32). Some, though, treat it as a variable. Indeed, there is a deep rift between those who hold that foragers 'almost universally' and by necessity pursue prestige (Dowling 1968: 504; see also Friedl 1975) and those who document cases which must be viewed as exceptions (K.L. Endicott 1979; Gardner 1966; Leacock 1978).

Friedl contends that, because 'of the frequency with which men have greater rights than women to distribute goods outside of the domestic group' (1975: 9), 'men have highly preferential access, although not always exclusive rights, to those activities to which the society accords the greatest value' (1975: 7). And: 'It is the right to distribute and exchange valued goods and services to those not in a person's own domestic unit . . . which confers power and prestige in all societies' (1975: 8).

She claims the almost universal male control of extra-domestic distribution comes about among foragers due to the male monopoly on hunting large game animals, which are usually distributed widely in the community when obtained (Friedl 1975: 32). By acting publicly, the 'generous giver' gets 'recognition and esteem' (1975: 22).

Paliyans virtually eliminate extra-domestic giving of goods and services. They hunt large game only a few times a year. When hunters do bring down a large deer or a wild pig, they thank the gods for sending them food and, before returning home, the whole party portions it out into piles in accordance with the number of hunters, all piles containing equivalent amounts of leg and side meat, edible organs, etc. Collective catches of fish are divided the same way. Final adjustments are made on the basis of jovial discussion. It is noteworthy that the participants may not all be men and that no one *gives* the food. When participants agree that all piles are alike in size and content, each person *takes* a convenient pile.³ Later, informally and in private, the participants' nearest relatives drop by to acquire small portions of the meat. Again, Paliyans avoid ceremonial distribution. In one arena after another, the kinds of public attention that give males and elders prestige in most other societies are avoided, not sought. Quiet independence and self-reliance are valued.

Paliyans are not a lone exception to Friedl's theoretical expectations, for several other foraging peoples – including Ju/'hoansi, Mbuti, Eastern Hadza, Malaysian Negrito and Montagnais-Naskapi – act similarly. Each has a repertory of levelling mechanisms which make it difficult for anyone to acquire a disproportionate amount of public attention (e.g. the work of Draper 1978; K.M. Endicott 1979; 1988; Henriksen 1973; Leacock 1969; Lee 1969; 1979; Marshall 1961; Schebesta 1927; Tanaka 1980; Turnbull 1965*a*; 1965*b*; Wiessner 1982; Woodburn 1968*a*; 1968*b*; 1972; 1982). Paliyan behavioural data speak eloquently and consistently, and make it reasonable to conclude that Paliyans deliberately seek prestige avoidance. We are not left guessing, though, about their intentions. The Paliyan code regarding disrespect provides confirmation.

What 'headman' means in an anarchy

Reduction of social tension is possible if group members step forward with playful, witty or soothing words. A band usually has one or two people with such skills, seen in action when there is tension caused by open interpersonal friction, a ritual not proceeding as it should, or the death of a community member. If they distract or calm the main parties in a conflict, their actions can be thought of as conciliation.

As several subjects put it, they are 'clever' people, with 'good heads'. They are designated by two terms, *naaTTaanmee* and *talevan* (cf. plains Tamil *naaT-TaNmāi*, 'head or chief of village [territory]', and *talaivan*, 'headman'), both of which mean 'headman', though they have no mandate to punish, order, arbitrate or even suggest. Whether they calm or distract, they do not violate the rights of those in conflict. An effective head may be thought of as a lubricant which reduces social friction.

In the more settled Paliyan community, PulaavaTi, one active and effective wielder of wit was Mutti KeLavan (Old Man Mutti). This octogenarian's main tool was a sizable repertory of sexual figures of speech. He was particularly prominent during three crises I witnessed in PulaavaTi. Each deserves a few words.

Construction of a thatched mud hut for me was interrupted by collapse of a hastily built wall. The Paliyan builders spoke of my disappointment; they were also under pressure to return to their regular jobs. Tensions arose. When work resumed, Old Mutti drew smiles with one *double entendre* after another. He 'put' mud in holes to 'fill [them] in', poked his index and middle fingers at the wall and at two young female coworkers, and tossed mud between the two women's legs. Later that day, he amused those present with a story about 'doors', including 'small doors' (said with a nod towards an 8-year-old girl who sat beside him), and he drew gales of laughter by pursuing a young woman with well-faked amorous intent.

Four hours into a long-unsuccessful attempt to call the *caamis* (protecting gods), Old Mutti triggered a period of joking by suggesting that 'this side' and 'that side' be put together, which people took to be a sexual innuendo. He made puns constantly and drew some in reply.

Finally, during the funeral of his cousin's wife (the oldest person in the community), Old Mutti catalysed joking, mock sexual assaults and composi-

tion by a young woman of a sexually suggestive poem about him. Seven people participated actively in this humour; another four cooperated by playing the victim's role. At the burial, Mutti's last quip was sombre; about the vanities of this life.

Catayan, in Cempaka Tooppu, also provokes smiles in order to reduce social tensions, but he relies more on clown-like bumbling and playfully inappropriate role behaviour. One enjoyable routine consists of his pretending he needs to borrow a common object, something which he almost certainly already owns.

Both Catayan and a PulaavaTi head, Porucan, use straightforward verbal reassurance toward the same ends. I, too, sat down twice to reassure consultants of mine who were agitated by their fellows.⁴ Once, I told a 38-year-old man who was weeping and packing to leave, 'Poonnan, there was a misunderstanding. No one meant to hurt your feelings. We all respect you.' I was referred to subsequently as a headman on the basis of this act.

Tamils recruiting Paliyan labourers need foremen, and two contractors' agents explained to me that, by trial and error, they appoint those Paliyans who are adept at coaxing or teasing their fellows into coordinated effort. They take it as given that their appointees have authority as leaders. Since they see no evidence that other Paliyans hold legitimate power and in keeping with their own (Tamil) culture, the contractors' agents call their Paliyan foremen 'headmen'. Paliyans, when introducing these foremen to other outsiders as headmen, imply nothing in regard to leadership. They admit to no one having authority over others and it would be inconceivable to them that anyone can grant another person authority. Yet, as Paliyans understand it, the term headman is not a problem. Foremen have to have good heads for the facilitating they do.

This may be the key to understanding why Paliyans use one term for two very different roles. Paliyans should have had no trouble labelling conciliators and foremen alike; precisely the same traits qualify people for both roles.

Principled anarchy and attempted nonviolence

From a Paliyan viewpoint, control and management of conflict begin with self-restraint. To help one to keep a sense of annoyance or injury under control, two things can be done. First, anger can be subdued or dispelled by smoothing crushed blossoms of *ciruppaaNi puu* on one's own forehead (Gardner 1995: 128). Second, alcohol can be avoided. Although palm toddy was readily available in contact situations even during state-wide prohibition, almost all Paliyans abstain from it totally; they fear it and explain that it unleashes anger.

Physical withdrawal by the offended party is a useful way of managing conflict situations. It allows an offended or threatened party to combine self-restraint with self-protection. When Paliyans deal with Tamils the protective element is particularly important; plains people seldom exhibit 'normal' self-restraint. Protective withdrawal is also useful when Paliyan children are treated disrespectfully by their parents; in order for them to find suitable refuge, cooperation of other adult Paliyans is called for. Men and women told me that

separation allows for anger to dissipate and observational data bore them out, but the success of these measures will be assessed below.

If a self-appointed conciliator distracts with wit or soothes with diplomacy, this is done in a respectful way, never at the expense of the principals. The point of the wit is, rather, to divert the attention of those who are distressed. *Caamis* (protecting gods), who function rather differently, may also take an interest. Spontaneously or by invitation, they offer protection, comfort and authoritative explanation. However, and Paliyan beliefs notwithstanding, heads and *caamis* do not take on all kinds of conflict. Heads seldom deal with marital disputes and heads and *caamis* become involved only with serious problems.

One sees several other responses to disrespect as well. Infrequently the victim talks back, strikes retaliative blows or, at least reportedly, resorts to sorcery. Periya Poonnan, whose disrespect was described above, tends to resort to words or blows. Paliyans view these as problematic because they increase the number of people acting disrespectfully.

Third parties sometimes add to the problem, too. On occasion an adult cautions a disrespectful child; depending on who does it, how old the child is and the tone, the caution itself can border on being offensive. Brothers may act protectively towards their sisters. Paliyans find this understandable, especially if the girl or woman has been hit or threatened, but proper intervention fosters disengagement, not extension or widening of a dispute. In rare cases, trusted outsiders are asked to assist in a crisis, but this can be tricky if the outsider acts in ignorance of Paliyan social principles.

Finally, among sedentary Paliyans, a *kuTTam* (community gathering with no outsiders present) may be called to diagnose a problem and discuss possible solutions. I saw evidence of uneasiness over one such gathering and find that there is, as yet, incomplete consensus that *kuTTams*, with their improvised procedures, have authority to take such action.

Changing patterns of conflict as Paliyans become sedentary

Settled Paliyans deal with interpersonal problems almost as well as forest-oriented Paliyans. This is shown by a consideration of all observed instances of *tarakkoravaa* (disrespect) among a forest-oriented group of Paliyans, Cempaka Tooppu, and among a long-settled Paliyan community of agricultural labourers, PulaavaTi. Although some cases seem mild, they entail disrespect by Paliyan definition. Both groups had mixed economies when studied, but with differing reliance on forest and plains, and both were found in a frontier area, one just inside the forest edge, the other just outside it.

Early in the twentieth century a cluster of tiny orchards and plantations grew up where a river emerged from the forest. There had previously been several Paliyan campsites along the river course, some of whose residents, especially men, undertook seasonal work in the forest for forest produce contractors. Once the sites were surrounded by plantations, Paliyans saw two of them as uninhabitable and they retreated up the valley. Yet, plantations added to the possibilities for outside employment. In the 1960s some members of the displaced band camped nearby again and parts of two other bands coalesced with them. The entire development, including the new Paliyan settlement, was

named for one of the larger plantations, Cempaka Tooppu (Magnolia Grove). The population peaked at 61, but people came and went constantly. Patterns of work illustrate their continuing forest orientation. A survey of the work schedules of 37 Cempaka Tooppu Paliyan adults revealed a higher commitment to subsistence foraging than to paid labour in the course of a year. Employers regarded all but three or four Paliyans to be highly unreliable: they worked when they felt like it, were alienated by raised voices, and often vanished for weeks or months at a time.

PulaavaTi, a 150-year-old community of sedentary agricultural labourers, was uncharacteristically large. Twenty-four Paliyan households, six non-Paliyan households, and a small shop formed a compact hamlet, shaded by giant tamarind trees, on flat holdings of a large agriculturalist. Importantly to the 79 Paliyan residents, it was several kilometres from a Tamil village and less than 100 metres from the forested foot of a steep range that rose 2000 metres above them. Most worked seasonally under Tamil foremen and with Tamil coworkers, ploughing rice fields, transplanting rice, weeding, protecting fields from wild pigs, and harvesting for a big landowner. Others competed for Paliyan labour at peak times to work with turmeric, cotton and peanuts. All PulaavaTi Paliyans exploited the forest during the off-season and some individuals or families did so all year, unless coaxed into a few days of field labour, alongside friends and relatives. This was a matter of personal choice. Except during peak labour seasons, if promising animal tracks were found, most men just left word that they were unavailable for work that day. Foremen grumbled, but Paliyans were, otherwise, reliable and inexpensive labourers. But some Paliyans responded to anger and threats in their time-honoured way, by taking an extended break.

Twenty episodes of conflict and distress were recorded during 137 days of observation in Cempaka Tooppu; eleven were recorded during sixty-five days of comparable study in PulaavaTi (difficulties with outsiders are excluded here). Many incidents were momentary and all but invisible. In one, a mother mildly swatted a fretting child, then handed him to his grandmother who took him with her to work for the day. In another, a person packed and departed in silence over a perceived slight. Episodes occurred every six or seven days, and twelve out of thirty-one took place without raised voices, leaving onlookers and kin with little information and divergent views about what had transpired. The sources, incidence and management of conflict will be examined community by community.

CEMPAKA TOOPPU

In the forest-oriented community, 45 per cent of disrespect cases entailed difficulty between spouses (two-thirds of these involved sexual jealousy); 25 per cent resulted from maternal frustration over tantrums or misbehaviour; there were lone cases of property being stolen, a joke going sour, a youth being accused of impropriety, malingering, young playmates hitting one another, and a young man striking a misbehaving youngster.

Jealousy plagued three couples in particular. Naacci (age 50) accused her husband, Periya Poonnan (60), of having or desiring affairs with three women

and was offended by his giving food to thin, needy granddaughters. Cuppamma (24) accused her husband, KooTTe (28), of two affairs and felt added fury on discovering herself wrong about the identity of one lover. Muttamma (22) accused her husband, Veelan (19), of an affair and was jealous when he gave food to his mother. Each jealous woman took temporary leave at least once;⁵ two showed self-restraint once; and Naacci shouted at and struck her husband three times, twice making him the aggrieved party (once Periya Poonnan hit her back; at which her brother came over and intervened verbally). Not long before my field work three other couples in the community had similar difficulties, but with circumstances reversed. Although I did not observe these cases, they warrant mention because they demonstrate that jealous husbands may also leave.

Of course, self-restraint can head off such problems. Raaman (56 and ill) said nothing when his wife Lacmi (28) began seeing Kritnan (20), so I hesitate to label it a case of disrespect. Kritnan soon moved in with them, creating what most considered a polyandrous household. Then Kritnan, like several other men, became interested in newly mature Cellamma. Lacmi subtly encouraged Cellamma's relationship with another suitor, but so did Raaman, who believed that if Kritnan ran off with Cellamma, Lacmi would follow. Restraint such as Raaman's is not unusual. I have heard more than one husband say 'it is not my business' as regards his own wife meeting a lover.

In three of the four cases I recorded, Cempaka Tooppu mothers who lashed out at misbehaving children initiated separation or let another adult take the attacked child to refuge. A tiny girl was merely swatted with a strand of soft plant fibre; three women (and Cuppamma did this twice) actually spanked boys, audibly but not severely. Once, the child's paternal grandmother stayed the mother's hand. The mother who made the harshest attack – three loud slaps on the buttocks – wept over what she had done; nothing was said to her, but a non-relative immediately led her 10-year-old⁶ off to twenty-four hours of shelter. Due to housing arrangements and everyone's reticence when asked about physical violence, I did not learn the outcome of one mild spanking; if separation occurred it was not obvious.

There were varied reactions to the six other disrespectful acts. I saw simple forbearance when a youth, Kritnan, absconded with four stolen items: a machete-like billhook, a chicken, 1 rupee cash, and a piece of cloth. No voices were raised at the time and two weeks later, when Kritnan returned, his victims said nothing. The past record gives evidence of blows over unsanctioned use of property, then intervention by conciliators – who I find, on reviewing these cases, enter into the problem-solving process far less than Paliyans would have us believe.

A light jest about two forest produce contractors offering different pay rates hurt the feelings of several Paliyans who worked for the lower wage. One man wept, packed and departed for two weeks, his relatives close behind him. On their return, the remainder of the group took leave for a few days.

Circumstances suggest that Periya Poonnan's loud complaint about sexual improprieties of youths probably referred only to the early amorous adventures of his niece, in whom he exhibited more than an uncle's interest. Indeed,

Periya Poonan's implied that his problem was sexual jealousy. His niece ignored his outburst.

Nallamma's malingering behaviour was especially difficult for her young husband, but little obvious protest or words of complaint were ever heard from him.

Four female pre-adolescents annoyed one another from mid-morning to mid-afternoon one day. Three used fists, though with little force, and three at times wept. The only adult present was both the mother of one aggressor and the aunt of one injured girl. In the morning she came over, stood by her injured niece, and asked the others to stop the abuse – to no avail. In the afternoon again, from the first sound, she voiced her objections. This episode may seem mild, but Paliyans regard all four participants as being disrespectful. It was the only event of its kind during the field study.

Finally, a youth struck a misbehaving 10-year-old. Her 30-year-old brother walked up immediately and by merely asking 'What is happening?' brought the incident to a close.

PULAAVA Ti

Settled Paliyans differed from forest-oriented Paliyans. First, although extra-marital affairs were rare and overt sexual jealousy was absent, there were two complicated assaults which bore upon sexual and marital relations (these represent 18 per cent of the PulaavaTi cases). Second, there were differences in tone of parent-child relations. There were not only proportionately more instances of punishment (45 per cent of the cases), but parents responded to children in a slightly more aggressive manner and there were no obvious steps taken to separate children from upset parents. Third, there was frequent squabbling among young playmates (36 per cent).

The sole, publicly acknowledged affair took place between two married people, Potteyan (30) and his wife's cousin, Paappa (27). Spouses of both acted unconcerned. Following a day-long tryst, however, Paappa's brother, Kaamaacci, asked Potteyan where he had taken Paappa. Potteyan snapped back 'Why do you ask?' Being told that his reply was rude, Potteyan struck Kaamaacci with a stick. Kaamaacci grabbed his neck and they fell, fighting. A neighbour tried to separate them. Then Kaamaacci's mother arrived in tears and asked 'Why are you beating my son?' Potteyan turned on her rudely saying that, if her son stayed, he would kill him. Despite the turmoil, no physical injuries were in evidence, but Kaamaacci and his mother were shaken. On the old woman's urging, Kaamaacci, his wife and daughter left the community temporarily.

A young girl called me to a commotion one evening. Catayan, in his early 30s, stood shouting and trembling in his doorway, a billhook upraised. Others, too, were raising their voices. Asked to do something, I acted on the theory that Catayan could not swing the billhook. I advanced and, telling him this was not wanted, wrapped my hand around the blade. He released it and led me into his house where TaaTake, his wife, sat weeping. Showing me an empty food pot, he tearfully spilled out his story. His very pregnant partner had fed him and their four children, telling him that her portion was still in the pot.

After dinner he found it to be empty. He upbraided and struck his wife for starving herself and the unborn child. Hearing shouts, his mother and an unrelated young man from next door rushed in. Catayan struck them too, so they retreated. Other relatives and neighbours arrived at the scene and TaaTake's 45-year-old brother sent the girl to fetch me. Hearing Catayan's tale, those who were assembled acted as if the crisis was over for the moment. A community meeting, held next day in my absence, was uncomfortable and inconclusive; reportedly it amounted to a vague rebuke.

PulaavaTi was less open than Cempaka Tooppu. Proximity allowed me to learn that children were struck and to identify those involved, but the configuration of the settlement and Paliyan reticence impeded enquiry about antecedents and results of the outbursts. Four boys each received one maternal spanking and another child escaped a woman wielding a stick. The blows were slightly more severe than in Cempaka Tooppu; perhaps more significantly, there was no evidence that adults arranged temporary separation of children from their attacking mothers or that the assailants felt remorse.

Finally, there were four cases of light hitting within children's play groups, though the squabbles were minor. One child cried, but in three instances no voices were raised. Adults were nearby on two of the occasions: once a man called from his house for everyone to stop, which they did, and once a child hit a younger sibling in front of the mother, who ignored it. One mock fight also bears mention. A seven-year-old girl hit a six-year-old boy gently in play, then ran off. An adolescent woman, not closely related to either, seized the aggressor and suggested that the victim hit back. He hit the struggling attacker gently and the two of them went off to resume their play. Acts of this kind would be unremarkable in most societies; among Paliyans they are evidence of disrespect.

The two communities

While the frequency of disrespectful behaviour is low for both communities, its level or severity differed. PulaavaTi Paliyans exhibited less self-restraint than their forest fellows when creating difficulty and when responding to it. (1) Blows were struck in nine of the twenty Cempaka Tooppu cases (45 per cent), compared to nine of the eleven PulaavaTi cases (82 per cent; there was a threat of violence in the remaining two). (2) Retaliation occurred more frequently in PulaavaTi and there was a shift from verbal responses to blows. In Cempaka Tooppu four verbal retorts (20 per cent) and one physical retaliation (5 per cent) took place; in PulaavaTi one verbal (9 per cent) and four physical responses (36 per cent) were witnessed. (3) The differences in handling of parent-child conflict in the two research sites should also be recalled.

Conflict among settled Paliyans was perceptibly more severe than among forest-oriented Paliyans in several ways. Yet, summarizing the picture like this badly misrepresents the facts. What Paliyans considered to be shocking blows were almost always light, and few blows were struck in any particular case. Potteyan and Kaamaacci's confrontation was the only one with truly unrestrained hitting. Even then, neither sustained injuries, bloodshed, or bruises.

Settled Paliyans may be relatively less self-controlled, but they cannot, by most cultural standards, be called violent.

There were two differences in the types of disrespect found in Cempaka Tooppu and PulaavaTi. First, for settled PulaavaTi Paliyans, parent-child difficulties and squabbles among children, together, comprised nine of the eleven cases of conflict (82 per cent of the disrespect, cf. 30 per cent in Cempaka Tooppu). Moreover, PulaavaTi children usually had to face disrespect from adults and age mates alone. If they had a right to respect, by forest Paliyan standards they seldom enjoyed adult protection from those abusing that right. PulaavaTi children suffered only minor assaults, yet long-term systemic implications of their lack of protection should not be overlooked.

Second, there were dramatic differences between the two communities in regard to marital relations. Except for Potteyan and Paappa's affair and Catayan and TaaTake's problem over food, marriages in PulaavaTi appeared publicly to be tranquil. Jealousy, particularly sexual jealousy, was not evident. This could be a partial function of new ways of handling courtship, weddings, marriage and extra-marital attraction. Paliyans characteristically claim to be orthoprax when subject to harassing criticism by their neighbours; if they have to, they put on a studied show of Tamil propriety. Responding to almost continuous pressure from their neighbours, PulaavaTi Paliyans more often performed weddings than their forest cousins, did so elaborately, and had ceremonies three to ten times as expensive as those held in Cempaka Tooppu. Saving money for weddings made marriage a later and less impulsive business for prospective partners, who did most of the saving themselves. Consistently with this, courtship began not at puberty, as in the forest, but some time afterwards. PulaavaTi youths did gaze at people, the Paliyan way of expressing sexual infatuation, but relatively infrequently and it did not lead to obvious trysts, or to elopements and marital realignments. Amorous inclinations were reined in.

In Paliyan handling of disrespect both similarities and differences were to be found. Men and women in both settings chose forbearance rather than taking offence when faced with the insensitive actions of others. Certainly, an explicit ideology of nonviolence was expressed in both communities. One possible measure of its effectiveness was the large and similar percentage of cases of conflict in the two groups in which no voices were raised (Cempaka Tooppu 40 per cent, PulaavaTi 36 per cent). Also similar were two episodes in each community of brothers keeping an eye on their sisters; in the three instances in which their sisters were struck, men pressed in immediately, providing or arranging for intervention.

One major difference in handling of disrespect might have been expected: settled Paliyans resorted to mobility and separation less often than their forest kin. Separation of a few hours to about two weeks was witnessed in ten cases of disrespect in Cempaka Tooppu (50 per cent), but in just two in PulaavaTi (18 per cent). We may conclude that, for Paliyans, separation was valuable without being the sole key to maintaining social peace.

Other possible factors in the nonviolence of settling Paliyans

While studies of other foragers, particularly in Africa, indicate that the frequency and severity of disputes commonly increase with sedentism, the first

of the factors affecting disputes described earlier in this article, examination of Paliyans has shown that settling *per se* brings no increase in frequency of conflict and only a modest increase in severity. It is necessary to peruse the remaining fourteen factors that I discussed earlier; I refer to them here by the number and short name used above.

(2) Group size: By virtue of its enhanced size alone, PulaavaTi should experience more disputes, though in fact it had slightly fewer, 0.8 episodes per person per year compared to 0.9 for Cempaka Tooppu. Johnson (1982) has calculated dispute frequency in relation to group size for a number of societies, and using his preferred measure of size – the number of extended families – PulaavaTi should have 1.45 times as many disputes as Cempaka Tooppu (1.3 disputes per person per year, not 0.8). Larger size, then, appears not to generate more conflict for Paliyans.

(3) Property constraints: The immovable property of most sedentary Paliyans is substantial and does seem to affect their willingness to walk away from problems. Yet, in bad circumstances, they can break labour contracts and walk off with what they are able to carry. Property is a disposable anchor.

(4) Domestic privacy: People are protected from prying eyes in PulaavaTi, most of the new houses having small doors and solid walls by Paliyan standards. However, the dwellings are clustered together, Indian fashion, so that anything above a quiet conversation can be overheard by immediate neighbours. What is more, much activity occurs out of doors and social life is seen and heard by greater numbers of people, not fewer.

(5) Accepting arbitration from leaders: Although settled Paliyans have not taken this path, we must take note of their newly instituted council (*kuTTam*).

(6) Economic competition and male status: Comparing PulaavaTi gender behaviour of 1963–4 and 1978, interaction with outsiders having intensified in the interim, I found that people in 1978 arranged things so that men ate ahead of women, Hindu fashion, when feasting publicly (Gardner 1988). Women appeared fully in accord with the change. Although this seriously compromised Paliyan equality, men were still not competing with each other for status.

Of the six factors having to do with sedentism, property alone appears to play a big role in reshaping Paliyan social life. Yet actual cases show that even property can be tossed aside when circumstances are sufficiently pressing. What of culture contact?

(7) Subjection to external pressure: Forest Paliyans find this pressure to be real. In Cempaka Tooppu and among another forest band with which I worked, four Paliyans had been murdered by outsiders in five years; another forest band had been subjected to rape and pillage *by authorities*. When forest people settle, intermittent threats and demands become more continuous. This disturbs Paliyans. But the level of physical brutality against them drops, perhaps because murder and beatings would be more visible to authorities in the plains than they are in the forest. So, the most serious external pressure declines.

(8) Having a refuge: Sedentary Paliyans generally dwell at the edge of the reserve forest, their refuge remains available: they still turn to it occasionally for coping with intracommunal problems (e.g. Kaamaacci's retreat from Potteyan), when threatened or harassed by outsiders, and when a family member is seriously injured or ill (Gardner 1995). The forest is not a mere

geographic refuge; gamekeeping and protecting *caamis* remain an essential part of settled Paliyan life and they are identified distinctly as forest beings.

(9) Learning violence from outsiders: Even in the forest, I witnessed Paliyan children emulating a new (Tamil) teacher's violence: after he kicked and cursed at a young dog, sporadically throughout that day several children did too. Forest Paliyans commonly speak of themselves as being the opposite of Tamils in values and behaviour, particularly as regards violence. This view was *not* heard voiced in PulaavaTi and some behavioural convergence with Tamils was in evidence. They continue to devalue aggression, but voices were raised more often than in the forest and pets such as puppies were not treated as gently.

(10) Acquiring alcohol: PulaavaTi Paliyans firmly and persistently reject the idea that they might consume alcohol. They say it unleashes anger and they act as if they are unaware of any pleasurable effects. While some Paliyans attribute all violence of their neighbours to drinking, consumption of alcohol in fact is uncommon in south India and it is valued by relatively few Tamils.

(11) Getting adjudication from outsiders: Although there was no regular pattern of such resort, three PulaavaTi Paliyans asked me for advice on handling Catayan's outburst and I sensed that one wanted me to levy a punishment. However, they were not insistent and they let me withdraw from the matter once I told them that they should decide how to handle it themselves.

Of the five culture contact factors, only learning violence appears to be relevant. While changes were diverse, it must be admitted that the tone of life had altered but slightly; enormous differences between settled Paliyans and their loud, argumentative neighbours persisted. Not a single PulaavaTi Paliyan approximated normal Tamil behaviour.

Finally, we need to examine the four factors that are a function of the foraging way of life.

(12) Social levelling, especially through food sharing: Meticulous food sharing continues, unchanged, when PulaavaTi Paliyans hunt and fish jointly.

(13) Fearing sorcery: In both Paliyan communities, one finds belief in sorcery and belief that there are no effective countermeasures available (it is hard to ascertain whether people actually do constrain themselves out of fear of sorcery). Relevant to this theory, of course, is the lack of change in social controls among settled Paliyans.

(14) Competing for women: In the forest, both sexes experience longings and jealousy; partners may get upset with one another, even to the point of striking a light blow, but they never direct their physical outbursts at rivals. Among settled Paliyans married life is almost sedate. Competition for women is not a source of violence for Paliyans in either setting.

(15) Socialization of children: Paliyans teach children specific beliefs about violence and nonviolence in all settings, but enculturation becomes disharmonious and ambiguous when they settle. The sedentary children of PulaavaTi are taught a variety of ideas about respect and ways of dealing with disrespect, yet behaviour of parents and age-mates does not always accord with the principles. In the long run there is potential for systemic change if some children follow behavioural examples rather than traditional values.

Again, just one factor (out of four) may turn out to play a role in change – the behavioural component of enculturation. The main change is yet to come, however.

Conclusions

Paliyans have a system of institutions that bear upon the avoiding of violence. In the forest and now in settled villages, too, they are able to remain relatively nonviolent. The slight decrease in frequency of disputes as they settle and the modest increase in seriousness of disputes attest to the system's effectiveness under varied circumstances.

How do Paliyans compare with other foragers, and do the nascent theories of other scholars facilitate our understanding? For Paliyans, at least, we can see that coping with immovable property, learning violent behaviour from outsiders, and being subject to inconsistent enculturation all have the potential to reshape their culture. However, it is *continuation* of Paliyan nonviolence that needs to be explained. Among the fifteen factors reviewed, six may help us to understand the striking continuity of nonviolence: (a) experiencing little real change as regards subjection to external pressure, (b) retaining a place of refuge, (c) continuing to believe that alcohol begets violence, (d) maintaining levelling mechanisms, (e) retaining belief in sorcery, and (f) learning to respect others. The dynamics of Paliyan social life and change to sedentism may be manifestly different from those of other well-studied foragers, such as the Ju/'hoansi, but their system does make sense in context.

Two general features of the Paliyan system may underlie their success in settling without increased violence. The first is the multiplicity of apparent safeguards. What protects Paliyans against violence is a combination of respecting all others, restraining themselves, avoiding divisive prestige, using playful wit and soothing diplomacy in times of tension, and physically withdrawing from antagonists. The result could be called 'multi-determined'. In a long-settled Paliyan village, despite slippage, it is apparent that there can still be enough respect, self-restraint, mobility and conciliation to do the job, though changes in treatment of children do bear watching.

The second helpful feature is the tradition of trying to refrain from actions which could compound conflicts and stresses. Bateson (1935) once urged study of factors that restrained growing hostilities in cases of symmetrical schismogenesis, and Boulding (1962: 324–5) drew attention to the importance of 'controlling conflict at its sources' and 'catching conflicts young'. If, while they settle, Paliyans continue to believe that it is wrong to respond violently to violence and that all people deserve respect, this should do much to prevent positive feedback and runaway escalation of conflict.

NOTES

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¹Early reports for each area include: Asia (Ehrenfels 1952; Gardner 1966); South America (Lévi-Strauss 1955); Africa (Draper 1975; 1978; Turnbull 1965*b*; 1968; Woodburn 1968*b*).

²He surmised that I ate beef, a proscribed food for Paliyans (Gardner 1991*b*).

³If striking the first blow entailed danger, the number of piles is increased by one, and the hunter who struck it is expected to take two. While this could be construed as thrusting one person into the limelight, the quiet, matter-of-fact tone of the event suggests otherwise.

⁴Paliyan guardedness was a major factor in their relations with each other and with outsiders. When I left my tent one morning in clothes that resembled khaki, my first Paliyan study group dispersed and fled their valley, not to return for three months (Gardner 1988: 424). Twice after that, I took quiet steps to head off such fragmentation.

⁵If a distraught, departing mother fails to leave her infant with someone voluntarily, others follow and persuade her to relinquish it, so that it does not become an accidental casualty.

⁶His age was given incorrectly as seven in an earlier publication (1972: 432).

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Respect et non-violence chez les fourrageurs Paliyans récemment sédentaires

Résumé

Contrairement aux prévisions (e.g. Bender 1978; Draper 1975; Kent 1989, 1990; Rafferty 1985), les fourrageurs Paliyans en Inde du Sud restent relativement non-violents quand ils deviennent sédentaires. Je passe tout d'abord en revue quinze facteurs qui sont censés avoir rapport à certains aspects des disputes entre fourrageurs. Deuxièmement, les croyances et les pratiques Paliyannes sont examinées par rapport au respect de l'individu, aux tactiques pour éviter le manque de respect et aux façons d'adresser le manque de respect quand il se produit. Troisièmement, je compare les conflits et les moyens de les contenir dans une bande forestière et dans un village Paliyan établi depuis environ 150 ans. La fréquence des épisodes de conflit par habitant chez les Paliyans sédentaires est légèrement plus basse; leurs conflits sont plus intenses mais ils sont rarement sérieux. Finalement, les matériaux concernant les Paliyans sont examinés en faisant référence aux quinze facteurs de cause, dont six contribuent à expliquer la continuation de la non-violence. Le succès avec lequel les Paliyans maintiennent la paix peut être attribué en partie à la fois à la multiplicité de leurs sauvegardes et à l'empêchement de feedback positif. A long terme, cependant, les modifications du traitement des enfants laissent prévoir des changements.

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